



## **The Researching of Mirza Fatali Akhundov's literary heritage in the context of Eurasian Literature and the effects of Russian literary poetry**

**Shahbaz Shami Musayev**

**Literature Institute after the name of Nizami Ganjavi  
under National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan  
shindi61@mail.ru**

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### **Abstract**

Mirza Bala Mahammadzada (1898, Baku- 1959, Istanbul) is one of the prominent personalities having exceptional contributions in social-political, literary- cultural and scientific thought history. As he was a political emigrant in Turkey during Soviet period his life, multi- branched activity and rich creativity were remained out of sight of the researchers, no work was carried out in the sphere of publication and agitation of his scientific and literary heritage. However, both in the period of emigration and living in motherland until the 20s years of the XX century B.M.Mahammadzada worked very effectively and made a plenty of publisistic writings related with the most topical problems of the society. Until emigration he had laid foundation of research of the history of national media with his "Between two revolutions" (1918, Tbilisi) and "Azerbaijan Turkish media" (1922, Baku) monographs.

Researches on classic literature of Azerbaijan have a special place among M.B.Mahammadzada's scientific works which he wrote during his emigration years in Turkey. It should be noted that M.B.Mahammadzada's literary heritage of scientific works in emigration period involving researches on M.F.Akhundzada (1812-1878) who laid foundation of professional drama genre, realist artistic prose and literary criticism in Azerbaijan literature, besides being a great contribution to our country's literary

study, also played a significant role in study of his work in Turkey and keep on providing modern Turkish researchers with abundant materials.

We will conduct analyses on M.B.Mahammadzada's three work included to his scientific heritage of emigration period. These are the articles - "Fatali Akhundzada" (1), "Mirza Fatali and alphabet revolution" (2) and "Mirza Fatali and Pushkin" (3). The article "Fatali Akhundzada" was published in 1945, in Islam Encyclopedia, the other two were published in "Azerbaijan" journal printed in Ankara, Turkey. It also should be noted that in all three articles we come across factual erroneousness and it is related with objective reasons; in emigration M.B.Mahammadzada did not have sufficient literature with him, moreover during the years when the articles were written even in Azerbaijan the science of studying Akhundov was in the stage of formation. It also should be emphasized that in the articles there are also M.B.Mahammadzada's own thoughts and considerations born from his political views. And in many cases it reaches to an extreme degree. Presentation of analyses born from purely subjective approach as an absolute truth is regrettable and it does not fit with M.B.Mahammadzada's known level of scientific thinking. M.B.Mahammadzada in the introduction of his article "Fatali Akhundzada" evaluated the role of M.F.Akhundzada in the history of morality of the nation he belonged to quite right and presented him to the Turkish readers as "The first playwright and story-writer who laid foundation of new Azerbaijan literature with his comedies written in Turkish, the first westernist and critic, a herald of alphabet revolution in Turkish with his ideas and initiations on change of Arabian alphabet (1, 577). In the article first period of M.F.Akhundzada's life, his undergoing a family drama due to his parents' divorce, his "second father" Akhund Haji Alasgar's patronage on him, childhood years spent in the Southern Azerbaijan villages, Akhund Haji Alasgar's intention to raise him as a theologian, etc. were given. M.B.Mahammadzada paying special attention to M.F.Akhundzada's first education issue, considered his entering to Russian school and his learning Russian language a planned proposition. He thinks that there is a "secret" relation between Fatali's effort to learn Russian and his once and for ever abandoning the way of priesthood. M.B.Mahammadzada wrote: "The point which requires an attention is pursuit of a second incident his initiation to learn Russian..." (1,578). When he said the "second incident" he meant Fatali's courageous step to go to Tbilisi which changed his future way of life completely: "Haji Alasgar's intention to raise Fatali as a religious scholar as himself remained ineffective due to, as Fatali writes in his biography, "an issue which happened unexpectedly" (1, 578). Actually, M.B.Mahammadzada could not specify what M.F.Akhundov meant (the popular talk between Mirza Shafi Vazeh and young Fatali- Sh.M.) when he said "an issue taking place unexpectedly", but in any way he demonstrated a scientific approach to the problem by saying that behind change of his initial world outlook stood quite serious reasons and by substantiating his thoughts in his own way. M.B.Mahammadzada connected it with the social-political- historical situation formed in Northern Azerbaijan after Turkmanchay

contract (1828) concluded between Iran and Russia. According to M.B.Mahammadzada, restoration of Russian influence in the region and irreversibility of political events shocked the local ruling class and “made them to go to compromise to the Russians” and in a short period there was formed “an intellectual class consisting of the generation trying to assimilate Eastern and Western cultures and serving the Russian in compliance with new conditions” (1, 578). M.B.Mahammadzada reminded M.Sh.Vazeh, A.Bakikhanov, Mirza Kazim bey and M.J.Topchubashov as the first representatives of this class. With this he denied the reason “philosophy” born from atheism, the ideological branch of the political system put forward by the Soviet Akhundov studiers claiming that “Fatali abandoned the field of theology and left for Tbilisi for public administration work due to Mirza Shafi’s reproach (“Do you really want to be hypocrite and charlatan?... Do not waste your life among these disgusting people! Go for another specialty”). We think that the reason, or to be more exact, the change in his initial world outlook that guided Fatali to Tbilisi was directly related with social- political processes of the period and in this issue, we fully agree with M.B.Mahammadzada’s considerations. In the article the attention was also paid to M.F.Akhundzada’s successes in literary creativity who was working as a translator in the Caucasus viceroyalty. M.B.Mahammadzada referring to the autobiography written by M.F.Akhundov indicated that behind this success there stood political objections:

“His works were published still at that time under the name “Tamsilat” and were represented in Tbilisi palace. This favor of Russian mayor to Turkish language was related with a number of political reasons designed for eliminating the influence of the Persian culture on Azerbaijan and to replace it with Russian impact and it is understood from the documents published later showing Russian colonialism policy in Azerbaijan”. (1, 578). It should be noted that this issue was firstly touched in the work “Caucasus Turks” which was written in 1928 by M.A.Rasulzada, one of the founders of the first democratic republic in the East- Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan (4). M.A.Rasulzada wrote about above-mentioned aim of Russia 17 years before M.B.Mahammadzada: “...Russia agitated to write in national Azerbaijan Turkish in order to oppose the East against Iran influence in the Caucasian. Mirza Fatali who is considered the founder of modern Azerbaijan literature wrote his popular comedies with agitation of Vorontsov, the governor-general of Caucasus viceroyalty and as the first Turkish comedies were staged in Tbilisi palace, the writer’s works were also published in the publishing house of the governor-general” (4, 29 ). Of course, governor- general of the Caucasus viceroyalty M.S.Vorontsov’s “favors” for M.F.Akhundzada had evident purposes behind; if on one hand with establishment of national –cultural institutions in the Caucasus the writers were agitated, on another hand the main aim was to put away the tradition of writing in Persian. Although these issues were conducted on a political background and were calculated for political objections, it was a favor of the history that finally it turned into a service to a national literature and culture. In this sense, although M.F.Akhundzada and Georgian

playwright G.Eristavi seem skillful players of this policy, their creativity served for enrichment of the national literature with new types and genres. From this point of view, M.B.Mahammadzada's conclusion on this issue is quite right: "Fatali managed to establish a new literary school opening a new period both in national thinking, and national art fields" (1, 578-579). The analyses show that the aim of the Russian czarism was not only to eliminate Persian influence. Planned rusification policy was being carried out on the background of the care for the national culture. That is, the Persian influence was planned to be replaced by the Russian influence at the end. Establishment of Russian theatre in 1854 in Tbilisi served to implementation of this goal intending spread of Russian language and culture among the local people. The governor-general M.S.Vorontsov wrote it openly in his letter to Gedenov, the director of the Russian Imperial Theatre, asking him to send a theatre troupe for a tour to Tbilisi (5, 9). In the letter that the governor-general of the Caucasus viceroyalty sent to his friend Shepkin on the same day asked him to send an appropriate troupe from Moscow and explained its significance (5, 10). The researcher Ali Musayev while talking about establishment of the Russian theatre in Tbilisi draws attention to M.S.Vorontsov's letter he sent to Nicolay I in 1850. In the letter it is noted that the main aim is provision of assimilation of the local people with the Russians... (6, 12). M.B.Mahammadzada in his researches gave a wide place to M.F.Akhundzada's insistent struggle for new alphabet project and its implementation. In the article written for Islam Encyclopedia M.F.Akhundzada's activity in this sphere had been followed, it was indicated that being impressed by ineffectiveness and failure of his appeals to Istanbul and Teheran he wrote a number of literary works. It should be noted that M.B.Mahammadzada spoke comprehensively about M.F.Akhundzada's struggle for alphabet in his article "Mirza Fatali Akhundzada and his alphabet revolution" (2). In this article based on deep scientific content some considerations causing dispute are also met. After the analyses M.B.Mahammadzada concludes such a verdict that behind M.F.Akhundzada's alphabet projects there stood his intention to make it adopted by Ottoman state or Iran, not to the Russian government to which he served" and it was related with his uncompromising attitude to Russia.

Generally, M.B.Mahammadzada in all three articles of his wrote that M.F.Akhundzada had a hostile attitude towards Russia and "rusification". According to him, M.F.Akhundzada although lost his belief in Turkey and Iran, continued his struggle until the end, however "did not even thought about implementation of this project via Russian channel". Mirza Fatali, describing the Russian king Nicolay I as "a bandit of the world-wide scale" and desiring to raise the contemporary culture of the Moslem nations could not act otherwise" (2, 4). In fact, in these considerations putting aside the essence of M.F.Akhundzada's choice in favor of Turkey and Iran, he tried to politicize the problem and to show allegedly opposite position of the reformist thinker against Russia. Not going further into details let's in briefly note that M.F.Akhundzada sent his alphabet project to Turkey, Iran, as well as Europe's five main countries and

scientific circles in 1857 namely via Russian official channels. From M.F.Akhundov's epistolary heritage it seems that his activities related with a new alphabet had been in the focus of the official circles in Tbilisi up to its smallest details and he agreed every step of his with them. The reasons of launch of Turkish and Persian "channels" in alphabet issue were more accurately evaluated by an emigrant researcher Abdulvahab Yurdsever: "The enlightener earlier proposed this project to Ottoman government. Because Ottoman Empire had an exceptional religious and spiritual influence on all Islam world. This activity, at the same time, shows Mirza Fatali's deep commitment to Turkish and Islamic world. He avoided any individual action. If there was any need for reformation or complete change of the alphabet, according to him, it would be carried out at least with Turkey and Iran. It could not be performed alone. Azerbaijan's cultural relations with Turkey and Iran could not be tear out" (7, p.21). M.B.Mahammadzada's wrong position in this issue, his quite emotional attitude to this problem seems also to be related with two-headed policy of soviet regime regarding alphabet.

Only 10 years later after official replacement of Arabian graphics alphabet with Latin graphics in Azerbaijan in 1929, a transition to Cyrillic alphabet in 1939 M.B.Mahammadzada evaluated as a betrayal to M.F.Akhundzada's ideal, and considered it integral part of a planned policy: "Latin alphabet was removed and Russian alphabet was put into use in order to break the cultural unity ties with the Turks" (2, 5).

M.F.Akhundzada's calling Nicolay I "a bandit on a world scale" is far from the truth. In the original version of the writer's ode known under the name of "Eastern ode to A.S.Pushkin's death" and in the text published in "Moscow observer" for the first time such a phrase was not used: "But why did M.B.Mahammadzada declar such an accusation from the name of M.F.Akhundzada? In order to bring clarification to this or other questions, it is important to pay attention to the original version of the work in Persian (8), the first printed variant (9, 297-302; 10, 145-151) and the second printed variant (11, 76-79).

It should be noted that M.F.Akhundzada wrote this work in Persian and gave no name to it: "It is a mourning ode written by 25-year old Mirza Fatali Akhundzada to the death of the prominent Russian poet Pushkin" is not the name of the work, it is just dedication words of the author to the ode". M.F.Akhundzada himself translated this ode into Russian and adding 12 explanations to it, presented to I.I.Klementyev serving in Tbilisi. I.I.Klementyev sent the ode together with his letter to the editor of the journal S.P.Sheviriyov. The editorship of the journal published this "beautiful flower put on Pushkin's grave" without any change in 1837, March issue. In the work czar Nicolay's name was reminded only in one place, and exceptionally in a positive meaning.

In original in Persian:

"Gereit şöhräte fəzləş cəhan be don gunə



Ke şöhrəte Nikolay əz xətay ta tatar" (8)

In "Moscow observer":

"Распространилась слава его гения по Европе, как могущество и величие Николая от Китая до Татарии" (10, 149). ("The glory of his genius spread across Europe like the power and greatness of Nicholay from China to Tataria)

For the second time, the ode was published in 1874, in the 11th issue of the journal "Russian antiquities" with a brief introduction of Adolf Berje (11, 76-79). In the journal the ode for the first time was called namely a poem: "Eastern poem to Pushkin's death". It is known from Berja's notes that a bit later from publication of the ode in "Moscow observer" journal baron Rozen asked Russian writer A.A.Bestujov-Marlinski who was in a military expedition (M.F.Akhundzada was also participant of this expedition) in Abkhazia, Sebel region with him to translate the poem into Russian together with the author. A.A.Bestujev –Marlinski carried out this request of his in a short time. It was the last work of the Russian writer, a bit later, he was killed in a fight against the mountaineers. It is evident that M.F.Akhundov himself told this short introduction to A.Berje and it should be noted that the copy of the ode was given to him by the author also. Here, it also becomes clear that namely A.Berje called this ode a poem.

Comparison of the first published text and the text on which A.A.Bestujev-Marlinski worked shows that the Russian writer did not translate the ode completely once again. He conducted only small editorship works (8; 9, 297-302; 10, 145-151; 11, 76-79). In the line which we take from the "Moscow observer" the words "...and Nicolay's greatness" were extracted and the line was given in "Russian antiquities" in such a form:

"Разошлась слава его по Европе, как могущество царское..." (11, 78). ("His glory spread throughout Europe as the royal power")

Later in the text we come across the parts differing from the original which led M.B.Mahamaadzada's incorrect thought. Let's pay attention to differences of one of these parts: In M.F.Akhundzada's translation into Russian ("Moscow observer"): "Russia claims about it with sorrow: "О убитый рукою убийцы-злодея" ("Hey, you killed by a killer-villain") (9, 302; 10, 151). In A.A.Bestujev-Marlinski's editorship ("Russian antiquities"): "Россия в скорби и воздыхании восклицает по нем: "Убитый злодейской рукою разбойника мира" (11, 79). ("Russia is in grief and sighs on him: "He was killed by the evil hand of the killer"). By the way, it should be noted that the ode had been translated from Persian into Azerbaijani by M.Mushfig, B.Gasimzada and J.Khandan and in none of the translations the phrase "the bandit of the world" was used. Let's pay attention to two of these translations:

"Rusiya dad-fəğan ilə sual etdi yenə:

"Nə üçün quldur əlindən bu təbiət də sənə

Bir xilaskar ana qəlbilə aman vermədi, ah!" (12, 232).

Or:

"Rus torpağı yas tutub, fəğan qılır ki,  
Ey qatillər əlilə ölən namidar" (13, 158).

Unlike the original in Persian in translations into Azerbaijan in spite of "Nicolay" the word "czar" was used. The ode was included to "Selected works" by A.A.Bestuyev-Marlinksi published in 1990 in Russian language as his translation in the version and with the name as it was issued in "Russian antiques" (14, 224-227). As it seems, M.F.Akhundzada in fact, did not call czar Nicolay I "a bandit in a world scale". As A.A.Bestuyev-Marlinksi's editorship in a known style in "Russian antiquities" fitted the soviet ideology, the fibs about M.F.Akhundzada's opposite position against the czar sometimes penetrated to scientific literature also.

Therefore, it is evident from where erroneous considerations of M.B.Mahammadzada who was in an enemy position against the Russian czarist regime in the example of the czarist Russia and Soviet government, derived. M.B.Mahammadzada in his article "Mirza Fatali and Pushkin" (3) stated quite contradictive thoughts regarding the leitmotif of M.F.Akhundzada's above-mentioned ode, as well as the sources from which he benefited in writing it. According to his writing, when M.F.Akhundzada began to his activity as a playwright since 1850 as if he managed to learn French, "but at the time when he dedicated an ode to Pushkin's death, he knew none of western languages" (3, 6). Firstly, M.F.Akhundzada, did not know any of Western languages, including French. It can be seen from his letter to a French diplomat Monsieur Nicolay in December, 6, 1872: "I do not know any European language except Russian" (15, 215). Secondly, why M.F.Akhundzada had to know one of the Western languages in order to write an ode about Russian poet? From M.B.Mahammadzada's conclusions it follows that the author in his ode "... allotted a wider place to Western literature and culture which raised Russian writers including Pushkin" (3, 6) and due to this reason, as he did not know any of western languages he got the necessary information via Ottoman Turkish or by searching. We suppose, it does not need any further explanation. In brief, it should be noted that in the ode there is no talk about Western literature and culture, and M.F.Akhundzada would not need any search for information. Regarding to the influence of European literature on A.S.Pushkin, it is quite a different problem and M.F.Akhundzada in his ode had not got any objections on resolution of this problem. In the article an effort to analyze Pushkin's literary creativity on a political plane, putting aside his position in Russian literature draws attention. Moreover, it is difficult to put up with his verdict that after returning from the exile A.S.Pushkin became a palace poet. According to M.B.Mahammadzada, actually in the poem "Great Peter's Arab" Pushkin was charmed not with Peter's absolutism, but with his imperialism which he evaluated as "patriotism". Or in the poem "Poltava" claiming that Pushkin enjoyed Peter's "bloody freedom" approached to the issue from another prism. M.B.Mahammadzada trying to draw his "political portrait" in this or another sample of Russian poet's poems later came to an interesting conclusion: "Because of this, Mirza Fatali considering him

(Pushkin –Sh.M.) the enemy of czarism and brave freedom fighter devoted a poem to him, but later he reminded his name neither in his literary nor in philosophical works” (3, 8). From M.B.Mahammadzada’s logic it follows that A.S.Pushkin’s attitude to czarism did not satisfy M.B.Akhundzada. At that time, we need to speak about political identity of M.F.Akhundzada. Actually, at the end of the article, he determined M.F.Akhundzada’s political identity in his own way. It will be talked further.

In the article there is a serious objection against soviet political ideology presenting M.F.Akhundzada as “a supporter of Russian culture”. Rejecting this thought M.B.Mahammadzada wrote that in neither of his works including his ode dedicated to Pushkin M.F.Akhundov reminded “Russian literature”, “Russian culture” and showed “no admiration for Russians” (3, 8). Of course, political system used the personality of M.F.Akhundzada abundantly for conjecture purposes. In Soviet period the social-scientific movement founded by M.F.Akhundzada rejecting Arabian graphic alphabet was very often offended, and with transition to Cyrillic alphabet an ugly policy was conducted to break out the moral relation of Turkish nations in the USSR with Turkey. M.F.Akhundzada’s conceptual thoughts about modernization of the society, integration of his nation to the cultural world were skillfully interpreted. For Soviet political system M.F.Akhundzada was quite good history to be acquired. Not modern, namely historical past! Emigrant researcher Abdulvahab Yurdsever paying attention to this point wrote: “This point is exact that if Mirza Fatali lived in Soviet period, he would be either shot or expelled to Siberia as the well-known Azerbaijan researcher Firudin Kocharli, poet Huseyn Javid, Ahmad Javad and other numerous great writers, intellectuals, artists and scholars” (7, 25).

However, only one poem dedicated to Pushkin is not enough for speaking about M.F.Akhundzada on the plain explaining whether he was admirer of the Russia. In M.F.Akhundzada’s literary and philosophical works, in his rich epistolary heritage integration to Europe was put forward as a serious issue. With his social-political views, thoughts on society M.F.Akhundzada were close to Western philosophers and writers. He had deep knowledge on creativity of Volter, Montesquieu, Russo, Duma, Fenelon, Bokl, Shakespeare, Volney and others the names of whom he reminded in his works not once. In his outlook A.S.Pushkin was the founder of new-period Russian literature, a great poet gained love of the nation and he did not devote the ode to his death as “an admiration to Russia”. Again we share A.Yurdsever’s attitude in regard to this issue: “The writers as Pushkin and Lev Tolstoy are highly evaluated in the world culture. Everybody reads them in different languages and approves their literary genius. Our admiration for them is not because they are Russians or belong to Russian culture, but because they described the human life and soul masterfully leaving immortal works behind them.” (7, 26).

M.B.Mahammadzada in his article reminded three plays by M.F.Akhundzada and tried to clarify the aim of the author in them, however, could not demonstrate a right approach. In a word, in a concrete case he could not manage to clarify the



problem of author's position. Perhaps, here also his own political view, his personal attitude to Russian governance, Russian law hindered him to find out the idea of the work correctly.

For example, according to him, M.F.Akhundzada in his work "Hekayeti-khirs guldurbasan" described Russian government as a patron of smuggling and robbery (3, 8). Actually, M.F.Akhundzada's aim was not to reveal Russian governance. The author wanted to educate his countrymen who were supporters of old traditions by showing them in funny situations and it is an issue arising from his enlightening aesthetics.

At the end of the work Divanbeyi's speech who forgives Tanriverdi fully fits with the goal of the author: "Hey, people, let it be a lesson for you! It is high time for you to believe that you are not a wild tribe. It is a shame for you to join such evil work. Stop being engaged in theft, slyness!" (12, 98). Divanbeyi's final words were not more than "a green light" for M.F.Akhundzada to pass the censorship: "Do you know how much does the Russian government favor you and from what troubles protects? (12, 98) Or in the article M.B.Mahammadzada's thought on M.F.Akhundzada's another comedy did not fit the situation in a concrete case: "Mirza Fatali in his play "Vaziri-khani-Sarab" showed that no matter how liberal is the king, he will never be a reformist" (3, 8). However, in that comedy no issues related with a liberal king, reformism and other of such kind were put forward. Although differences in topics in all comedies M.F.Akhundzada speaks as an enlightener. Prominent literary critic Y.Garayev is fully right from this point of view: "In all "Tamsilat" the main aesthetic idea and literary ideal, as well as the outlook carry educational characteristics" (16, 230). According to M.B.Mahammadzada, M.F.Akhundzada in his literary works revealed Russian governance because he had not put up with colonialist policy of Russia in the region and considered him an enemy. In fact, with this conclusion M.B.Mahammadzada put forward political identity of the writer: "Azerbaijani Turk Mirza Fatali who struggled against the servitude discipline which Russians tried to make Azerbaijan adopt had a hatred against Russian governance, the symbol of ignorance... Mirza Fatali was against Russian governance and Russian social-political order, he was calling for a rebel against this regime." (3, 8). To my opinion, here the issue of M.F.Akhundzada's attitude to political system was made a bit severer, and was given in a very acute form. At least, it is possible to have a dispute on the last sentence. M.F.Akhundzada in the biography which he had written himself openly stated that the Caucasian governor-generals always respected him: " Since that date (since 1834 – Sh.M.) I am working in the position of a translator of Eastern languages at the Caucasian viceroys. They have always showed their respect and favor for me. I live in a welfare. I have had a rank of colonel. I am especially satisfied with the decent general-field marshal, knyaz Vorontsov, who had been my employer before Baron Rozen..." (15, 268). If to recall M.F.Akhundzada's orders and medals awarded to him by the government, the issue will be even more clarified. So, the claims about M.F.Akhundzada's hostile position against Russian political regime have no ground. But it does not mean that

M.F.Akhundzada was a supporter of the colonial regime under which his nation was. M.F.Akhundzada did his best for modernization of the nation he belonged to, for its achieving the culture and prosperity as the European nations prepared conceptual basis of integration to Europe.

So, we can note that in spite of certain contradictive and disputable points, M.B.Mahammadzada's articles on M.F.Akhundov's life and creativity although written approximately seventy years ago, preserve their significance and scientific value. There is a serious necessity for publication of M.B.Mahammadzada's both these articles and his other works which he wrote during emigration in Azerbaijan.

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